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THE WHOLESOME MEAT ACT

HOW IT'S GEARED TO SMALL MEAT PLANTS



C&MS-68

CONSUMER AND MARKETING SERVICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A plant capable of producing clean and wholesome products should be able to meet the requirements of the Wholesome Meat Act of 1967.

Let's examine the Act. First of all, its goal is to achieve a **sanitary, wholesome** meat supply for consumers—not to impose strict structural standards on small operators that might force them out of business.

Plants doing business between States must be federally inspected. There is no minimum volume of business required for a plant to be eligible for inspection. Workable arrangements are made to service inspection needs. The law requires that—within two, or in some cases, three years—those plants doing business only within a single State must be inspected by a State inspection program with requirements that are at least equal to Federal requirements.

Operators of federally inspected plants must submit drawings and specifications of their facilities, to show that their plants are capable of using sanitary procedures for producing wholesome products.

In administering the law as it applies to federally inspected plants, the Consumer and Marketing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture insists on change in existing construction **only** when it is necessary to insure production of wholesome meat products.

But meat products must be prepared in sanitary surroundings. Thus, C&MS will not accept plants or equipment that are unclean or not capable of being kept clean.

Following are standards, based on Federal inspection regulations, that you can use for planning new construction or improvements needed to comply with Federal meat inspection standards:

WATER SUPPLY

Your water must comply with U.S. Public Health Service standards. Have it certified by State health authorities. Water—both hot and cold—must be ample and be distributed to all parts of your plant, in order that frequent and thorough sanitation can be maintained.

DRAINS

Drains in your plant must be trapped and vented, properly located, and large enough to carry away waste liquids. Floors must be pitched to the drains. As a general guide—for adequate waste disposal—one drain is needed for each 200 square feet of floor space in slaughtering areas, and one drain for each 500 square feet in processing and other areas.

FLOORS

Brick, concrete, tile, or other waterproof materials are acceptable for floors. Wood floors are acceptable in some parts of the plant if they are in good repair and properly maintained. Wood floors are not acceptable, however, in slaughtering, curing, or other areas where meat juices and moisture collect.

WALLS

Glazed tile, smooth portland cement plaster, or properly caulked, rust-proof metal panels are acceptable for walls, since they can be effectively cleaned. Wood and other materials are also acceptable if smooth, in good repair, and capable of cleaning. Walls of wood or other moisture-absorbent materials are not acceptable where they are exposed to water and other substances that can penetrate the wood. Ceilings should be tight, smooth, and free from scaling paint that might fall into meat products. Ceiling materials must be moisture-resistant, except in dry storage areas.

DOORS AND DOORWAYS

Doorways through which product is transferred on rails or in hand-trucks should be wide enough so that the product won't brush against the doorways. There is no specific requirement for door-

way widths in existing construction. Such doors and doorways, if wooden, should be clad with rust-resistant metal with tight-soldered seams.

LIGHTING

Fifty foot-candles of light are required wherever inspection is performed and where plant employees are examining products for cleanliness. Twenty foot-candles of overall illumination are required in areas where product is processed. This much lighting is necessary for adequate visibility. No specific minimum illumination is required in a product storage area. But there must be enough light to keep the area orderly and sanitary.

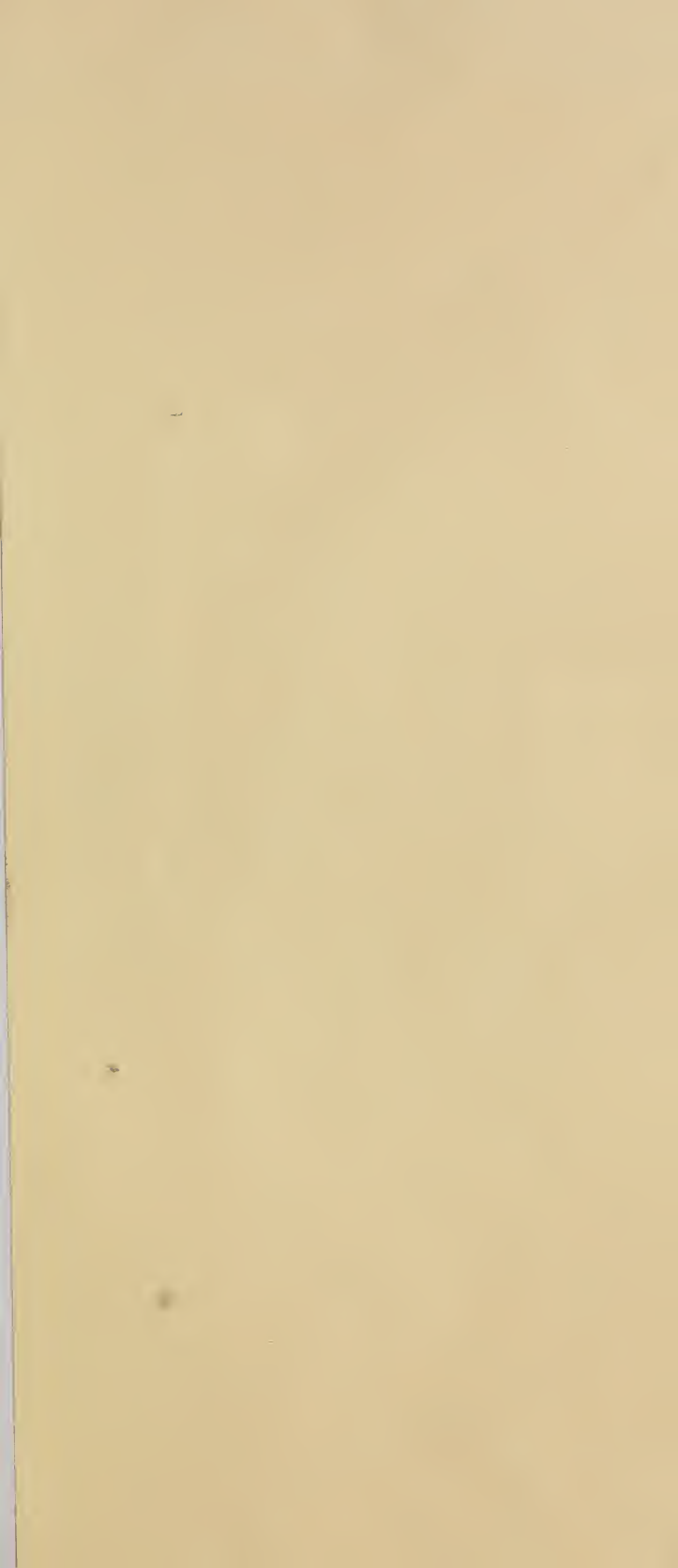
REFRIGERATION

To keep meat products sound, all rooms where meat is processed (not including slaughtering) or stored must be refrigerated at a temperature not above 50°F.

Existing facilities, where no refrigeration is furnished for processing areas, may be used for handling meat products if arrangements are made to thoroughly clean and sanitize equipment in use every four hours. Frequent cleaning is important, because under warmer temperatures there is a buildup of bacteria and a greater chance for contamination.

EQUIPMENT

Equipment should be constructed of stainless steel, galvanized steel, or aluminum. Wood tables and stands are not acceptable, because the wood absorbs meat juices and fats and cannot be thoroughly cleaned. Hardwood cutting boards which are smooth and free from checks and cracks may be used on metal boning tables as long as they are removable and kept in acceptable condition. Tables covered with linoleum or similar materials are not acceptable for contact with meat.



All equipment must be such that it can be thoroughly cleaned. Stationary equipment should be far enough from walls and other stationary equipment and the floor to permit proper cleaning around and under it.

Conveniently located foot-pedal-operated wash-basins with soap and disposable towels are required in rooms where animals are slaughtered. In processing areas, washbasins of sanitary construction with hot and cold mixing valves need not be foot-pedal operated if presently installed. Foot-pedal operation will be required on new installations. In slaughtering areas, lavatories should be convenient to the dressing operations. Hot-water boxes (electric or steam-heated to 180°F.) should be available for sanitizing tools contaminated with diseased material or other filth during the dressing.

RAILS

Rails in your plant must be high enough to prevent meat from contacting the floor and far enough from fixed objects such as walls and columns to avoid contact. In existing plants, present rail systems that don't provide suitable clearances are acceptable if adjustments are made to assure that contamination can be prevented and sanitation maintained. Such adjustments can include enclosing a column in a rust-resistant metal so it can be readily cleaned, or the routine cutting and re-hanging of carcasses to prevent contact with the floor.

Again, the basic concern is how meat can be protected from exposure to contaminated surfaces.

INSPECTOR'S NEEDS

If your plant is small and the operation is covered on a patrol basis, separate office space for the inspector usually isn't necessary. But in any plant the inspector needs a place to keep his supplies, change clothes, and make out reports. Such needs are considered for each particular plant and are reasonably applied.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS-

Get in touch with one of these USDA district meat inspection offices if you have questions or need help in solving specific problems relating to your own operation. Personnel of these offices will help you or put you in contact with someone who can.

(If you're in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, or Washington):

Rm. 825, Appraisers Bldg.
630 Sansome St.
San Francisco, Calif. 94111
Phone: Area Code 415, 556-8622

(If you're in Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, or Texas):

Rm. 376, Merchandise Mart Bldg.
500 S. Ervay St.
Dallas, Texas 75201
Phone: Area Code 214, 749-3747

(If you're in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, or Nebraska):

Rm. 905, U.S. Court House
811 Grand Ave.
Kansas City, Mo. 64106
Phone: Area Code 816, 374-5201

(If you're in Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, or Wyoming):

Rm. 638, Federal Bldg. and U.S. Courthouse
316 Robert St.
St. Paul, Minn. 55101
Phone: Area Code 612, 228-7835

(If you're in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, or Ohio):

Rm. 514, 226 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, Ill. 60606
Phone: Area Code 312, 353-5802

(If you're in Alabama, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, or West Virginia):

Rm. 206, 1795 Peachtree Rd., N.E.
Atlanta, Ga. 30309
Phone: Area Code 404, 526-5975

(If you're in Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, or Vermont):

Seventh Floor
1421 Cherry St.
Philadelphia, Pa. 19102
Phone: Area Code 215, 597-4216



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